

# Niger Delta Weekly: Preventing a Resurgence of Gang Violence in Rivers State

November 12-18, 2023

## Description

This weekly update spotlights organized criminality in the Niger Delta with a focus on gang violence in Rivers State. Clashes between rival cult gangs has been a major driver of conflict and insecurity in Rivers State. According to data (see map below), cult and gang violence caused over 200 fatalities in the State between January 2021 and September 2023. Recent data shows a rise in cult and gang violence in the State, after a few months of relative decline in reported incidents. In September 2023, for instance, a notable Divisional Police Officer (DPO) was reportedly killed by members of a notorious cult gang in Odeimude community, Ahoada East LGA. Separately, in September, a young man was allegedly beaten to death by hoodlums suspected to be members of a rival cult gang in Rumuodomaya community, Obio/Akpor LGA. In October, a young man was reportedly killed by gunmen suspected to be cultists at Mile 1 in Diobu community, Port Harcourt LGA. More recently, on November 12, 2023, gunmen suspected to be members of a cult gang reportedly killed five persons in Odiemerenyi community, Ahoada East LGA.

## Why it Matters

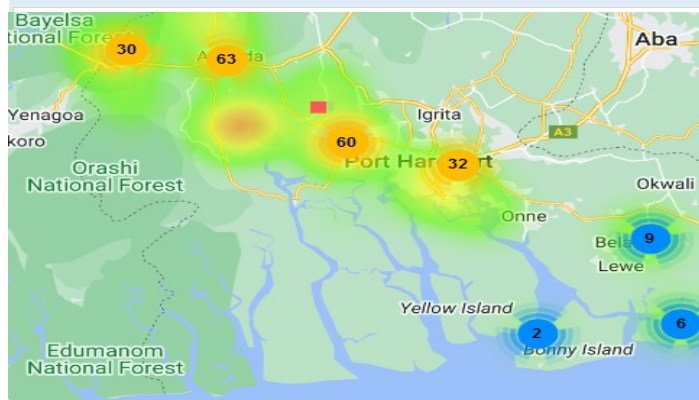
The current wave of cult and gang related killings could trigger a cycle of reprisal violence in the State. The situation could degenerate into extended battles for supremacy and territorial control among the numerous cult gangs in the State. The emerging trend of targeted killings could also take on various political, communal, and criminal dimensions, especially against the backdrop of rising tensions in the aftermath of the 2023 general elections, and considering the social, economic and political underpinnings of cult gangs in the State.

**Social:** An increase in cult and gang violence and killings could intensify organized criminality including proliferation of arms, drug abuse, robbery and kidnapping, and consequently heighten insecurity in the State. A rise in cult clashes could also embolden cult gangs to enlist more youths to defend their territory. This could provide avenues for cult gangs to spread into more communities and intensify insecurity.

**Economic:** A resurgence of gang violence and associated criminal activities could have a devastating impact on the local economy. Shop owners could be robbed or killed and markets looted during clashes between cult gangs. Gang violence could also prevent residents from patronizing businesses in areas dominated by cult gangs. This could cause loss of funds due to robbery, closure or relocation of businesses, and consequently loss of livelihoods and economic opportunities.

**Political:** A rise in gang violence could destabilize politics and governance in the State, especially considering that cult clashes and political violence are mutually reinforcing - cult gangs are often funded and used by politicians to attack opponents and influence election results.

## Fatalities Heat Map of Cult and Gang Related Violence in Rivers State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows the geographical concentration of fatalities caused by gang violence in Rivers State from January 2021 - September 2023. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map [www.p4p-nigerdelta.org](http://www.p4p-nigerdelta.org)

## Prognosis

The current wave of gang violence could intensify in ways that can adversely impact the dynamics of conflict in the State. Stakeholders should work with security agencies to intensify ongoing anti-cultism efforts. Stakeholders should also team up with media outlets to carry out peace education to discourage recruitment of youth into cult gangs. Interestingly, many civil society organizations are establishing 'Peace Clubs' in secondary schools and higher institutions as a platform for promoting positive social change to mitigate cultism.

## Contact Us

Inquiries: [PINDfoundation.org](http://PINDfoundation.org)

Contacts: [info@PINDfoundation.org](mailto:info@PINDfoundation.org) +234 (0) 9 291 0454

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## Report Incidents: IPDU Early Warning System

Please report any verified incident of conflict to the IPDU SMS early warning system: Text report to **080 9936 2222**

**Incident Details:** Kindly include the State, LGA, Town, Date, and brief incident description.



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